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QUESTION

AS IT STOOD IN

MARCH 1798.

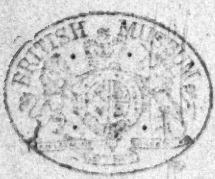
*"Cominciansi le guerre quando altri vuole, ma non quando altri vuole
e finiscono."*

MACCHIAVELLI.

LONDON:

Printed for R. FAULDER, New Bond Street; H. D. SYMONDS,
Pater-noster Row; and Messrs. RICHARDSONS, Royal Ex-
change.

THE
 This Pamphlet has received very
 early by the Politicians of this day
 QUESTION



AS IT STOOD IN

MARCH 1798.

Committee to examine papers and reports, was not prepared to do so
 "H. F. Johnson."
 MACONIAVERLEY.

LONDON:

Printed for R. FAVIER, New Bond Street; H. D. SYMONDS,
 Fleet-street Row; and MESSRS. RICHARDSONS, Royal Ex-
 change.

By Mr. Philip F. K. B.

The QUESTION

As it stood in MARCH 1798.

*"Cominciansi le guerre quando altri vuole, ma non
"quando altri vuole si finiscono."*

MACCHIAVELLI.

FOR all the useful and honourable purposes of national power, many circumstances contributed to give us the lead of Europe, while the French revolution was depending. In the year 1792, we might have dictated a pacification to the contending parties; or, if that failed, a well-ordered and a well-armed neutrality would have kept us in peace. The riches of the world would have flowed into this island, not only from the sources of its own commerce, improving and undisturbed, but even from the calamities of other nations. The peculiar advantages of that fortunate situation were too obvious to be mistaken. In departing from it, the minister could have no justification, but direct and irresistible necessity. To preserve such advantages, punctilios and formalities should have been disregarded, and every disposition, to explain and accommodate any serious cause of offence, should have been accepted and encouraged. The guilt of the war, if it was voluntary, is to be measured, as all criminal actions are, by its effects. When things are well, it is the business and duty of the executive government to keep them so. Great and certain possession is not to be hazarded for precarious acquisition; much less are safety and happiness to be a subject of experiment. The actual state

of England is the result of other maxims. The difficulties of the country have evidently grown with its exertions; and now we are called upon for efforts and contributions, which indicate a crisis of imminent danger, to be averted by the wisdom, or repelled by the vigour of the present Administration. Whether the conduct and successes of the war furnish a rational ground of confidence in their abilities, is a question open to the understanding of all men. That which touches their integrity, is not so easily determined, nor by the same sort of evidence. But it is, if possible, more important, and cannot be reviewed too often, or canvassed too minutely. Under *any* administration, the spirit of the people is sufficient to repel and defeat a direct attack. If it were possible for the enemy to land in force, a great deal of transitory mischief would ensue; but, sooner or later, they must perish in the attempt. This is not by any means the most discouraging view of our situation. A war prolonged without action or enterprise, an invasion threatened and suspended, and the expectation of it continually hanging over us, are the surest, and, for the enemy themselves, the safest instruments to accomplish the ruin of England. In the nature of things, this plan, if they adhere to it, cannot fail. To talk of expecting moderation and candour from a government provoked by injury and incensed by insults, to call them traitors and assassins, and in the same breath to reproach them with arrogance and treachery, as if the character and the qualities were incompatible, is mere folly and impertinence. The serious question is, not whether these people are good or bad, but by what means we are ever to be at peace with them. Then comes the importance of an inquiry into the principles and proceedings of our own government, as far as that of France has been affected by them. If the result of it should lead to a conclusion, morally

rally certain, that the Directory will never treat with them but as with rancorous enemies, and as the wilful authors of all the calamities of France, it follows of necessity that other men ought to be tried; unless it be contended, that the removal of such persons is too great a price to pay for the salvation of the country.

His Majesty's ministers affirm, that, in 1793, the war was just and necessary on the part of Great Britain; and that, in 1796 and 1797, their endeavours to make peace, and to renew the intercourse with France, were serious and sincere. On the other side it is asserted, that both these propositions may be false, but that both of them cannot be true, unless it can be proved that, in 1796, the character of the war was altered by events, which made the continuance of it, on its original principles, unjust and unnecessary. The issue to be tried is, whether the ministry did all they could at first to avoid the war, and, at last, to put an end to it.

On the 18th of June 1792, Monsieur Chauvelin, in the name of Louis the Sixteenth, invited his Majesty to "find some means to put a stop to the progress of a confederacy against France, which threatened the peace, the liberty, and the happiness of Europe." In return to this amicable appeal to his Majesty's wisdom, friendship, and good faith, he was informed that "His Majesty thought that, in the existing circumstances of the war then begun, the interposition of his councils, or of his good offices, could be of no use, unless it was desired by *all* the parties concerned." The pretence is weak and insufficient; but it proves the disposition. When *all* the parties in a war agree to desire the interposition of a neutral power, no friendly offices are wanted to bring them back to a pacific temper.---Peace is almost as good as made, when *all* the contending parties are

disposed to desire it. The obvious duty of a common friend, the true policy of a generous, or even of a prudent government, is to employ its good offices, and to exert its influence with those powers, which may be less inclined to views of moderation, to encourage and promote a pacific disposition, and to favour that party, which seems the readiest to listen to reasonable overtures, and to make concessions for the benefit of general accommodation. Such were the wise and honourable duties of England, when his Majesty's mediation was solicited and refused.

On the 27th of December 1792, Lord Grenville charged the French Convention with having passed a decree *calculated to encourage discord and revolt in every country*. The French ministry denied and disclaimed the sense attributed to the decree, and, in the strongest terms, disavowed any intention, on the part of France, to act on the principles imputed to that government. When no act has been done, and when nothing but a supposed principle, or general disposition, is complained of, an express disavowal of such principle and denial of such intention ought to be accepted; because it is all that the case admits of. A minister, who had seriously meant to preserve peace, would have allowed them to know their own meaning, even tho' he had distrusted their sincerity. Instead of that, he says drily, "I cannot conceal
" from you, that I have found nothing satisfactory
" in the result of your note, and we shall continue
" our preparations."

On the 31st December 1792, he tells Monsieur Chauvelin, who had taken the style of *Minister Plenipotentiary of France*, "that his letters of credence
" were from the Most Christian King, and that he
" could not be admitted to treat with the King's Mi-
" nisters in the quality he had assumed."

On the 7th of January 1793, Monsieur Chauvelin
appears

appears to have addressed two memorials to Lord Grenville. In the first he ~~complicates~~ and demonstrates beyond all possibility of reply, that the Alien Bill, moved by His Majesty's Ministers and depending in Parliament, and not making any exception in favour of France, was a direct violation of the Commercial treaty concluded in 1786, by which it was stipulated "that the subjects and inhabitants of
 " the two countries should have liberty to pass and
 " repass freely and securely, without licence or pass-
 " port," &c. and that this proposed law, under a general term of designation, was principally directed against the French.

In the second he represents that ships, freighted with corn for France, were stoppt by order of Government, and that, when the prohibition was taken off generally, as far as regarded *foreign* wheat, it was still enforced against France, and against France alone. These complaints were supported by arguments in detail, which it would have been difficult to answer in the same form: but that, which cannot easily be answered, may very easily be slighted. Lord Grenville returns the first of these memorials, in a note of six lines, *as totally inadmissible*. Why? Because Monsieur Chauvelin assumes a character, which is not acknowledged. To the substance of the second memorial he returns no answer at all. Why? First, "because it had been thought pre-
 " ferable in France *to bring forward difficulties of*
 " *form*." Secondly, "because he did not know
 " in what character Monsieur Chauvelin addressed
 " him." An objection to a diplomatic character, when there is no doubt of the authority, is a difficulty of form, and nothing else, and very unfit to be insisted on in so great and grave a question as that of involving two nations in the miseries of war. The language of power may be laconic, and they, who cannot resist, must submit to it. But such
 answers

answers between equals are not to be endured. The noble Lord has been taught to lengthen his monosyllables. The provisions of the Alien Bill are in direct and evident contradiction to the Commercial Treaty. Do His Majesty's Ministers mean to say that a treaty, concluded by the Crown, may be annulled by a subsequent Act of Parliament? If it may, in the first place, no foreign power is safe in treating with the Crown; and then what right have we to deny that the French Directory may be restrained by a previous act of their constitution from making particular concessions, or to affirm, as we have done, "that there existed a *droit public* in Europe paramount to any *droit public* they might think proper to establish in their own dominions *?"

On the 20th of January 1793, Lord Grenville positively refused to receive his new credentials from the Republic, and on the 24th, sent him an order to quit the kingdom.

Very early in that year the French were humbled by a variety of reverses and disasters, and ready to submit to any terms for an accommodation with England. On the 28th of February, another Minister Plenipotentiary (Monsieur Maret) arrived in England. It is not certain that his offers and submissions were listened to at all; but it was said that they were rejected as incompatible with the honour and dignity of the English nation to accept; and, on the 4th of March, he was ordered to quit the kingdom in three days. In the beginning of April, Monsieur le Brun, Minister for Foreign Affairs, wrote to Lord Grenville, to desire a passport for a person vested with full powers to terminate all differences with Great Britain. Of this request no sort of notice was taken. Short-sighted pride makes no

* Lord Malmesbury, December 20, 1796.

provision for the returning days of humiliation and repentance. When pacific offers and solicitations are neglected, or answered only with formalities, you may be sure that the cavaliers have taken their resolution. The motives and the arguments *follow* the inclination.

In December 1792, the French, having got possession of the greater part of Flanders, resolved to send some of their vessels up the Scheldt to attack Antwerp. How this act was received by the British Government is fresh in the memory of all men. If the French had sent a fleet into the Thames, the outcry raised against them could not have been more violent. Nobody could endure it, but the Dutch themselves, who showed no sign of life, and were very unwilling that we should meddle with their affairs. They had no anxiety about the navigation of the Scheldt. What they really dreaded was our interposition and assistance. We forced it upon them, we drove them into the war, and we accomplished their destruction.

But it was said that the real sources of the war lay deeper than in any offences or provocation of this sort; that other causes of difference might have been accommodated, but that French principles were never to be tolerated or forgiven, much less to be admitted amongst us. While all manner of topics and pretences were taken in aid of the main argument, the avowed predominant purpose of the war was to resist the propagation of *principles destructive of all order and society*, and, above all things, to prevent their introduction into England. On this ground, the war was uniformly maintained to be what Ministers called just and necessary—a common technical character, equally and invariably given, by all parties, to all wars of their own making. War is not to be undertaken or defended on general principles of justice, much less of expediency. One nation

nation has no jurisdiction over another. In making war, necessity, and nothing else, constitutes justice. The opprobrious language, with which this policy was enforced, is neither possible to be forgotten, nor very likely to be forgiven, by the French. Even to this hour it is not abandoned. In the speeches of the King's principal Ministers, and of all their adherents, the French Government, under every change it has experienced, was and is a collection of robbers, traitors, and assassins, incapable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity with their neighbours, and therefore properly the objects of vengeance and extermination, rather than of legitimate war. Such language, though it were true, would do no credit to the wisdom of those who use it. A prudent Minister, a statesman, with any experience of the uncertainty of human affairs, should have supposed the possibility of a reverse, and not have shut the door against future reconciliation. Neither is it honourable, or even safe, for a great nation, to treat at all with impious robbers, parricides, and assassins. But, while Ministers gave way to this imprudent passion, and indulged themselves in such rash and useless invectives, is it quite clear that they were in earnest? Did they then, do they now, believe that the same Government, to which they have repeatedly offered a project of "perpetual peace, of sincere and constant friendship, of reciprocal amity and intercourse," was nothing but a faithless band of traitors and murderers? Has there been any change in the principles of these people? Is it true that they have asked pardon of God and man for their manifold offences? If not, why are their principles less dangerous *now*, when they are crowned and confirmed by success, when even we acknowledge that they have at last produced a Government fit for the King of Great Britain to treat with, than they were in 1793? The parties

and

and the principles were the same. Lord Malmesbury was not instructed to object to the one, or to protest against the other. Both the negotiations broke off on questions of profit and loss, not on principles. In all the dispatches of the two embassies, there is not a single word about morality or religion, nor even of that obnoxious doctrine which was to occasion revolt and disorder in every country. If the French would have relinquished Flanders in 1796, or the Cape and Ceylon in 1797, we should have heard no more of their morals or their crimes. By offering to compound with such principles, and to unite with such parties, the Minister confesses that their crimes and their principles had little or no concern in the real motives and objects of the war. In fact, it soon appeared, that the purpose of the alliance was to dismember France, while the Allies talked of nothing but morality and religion.

The last, and not the least insisted on among the charges against the French, was, that they declared war first. With a willing audience, any nonsense is as good as any argument. A declaration of war is not an act of aggression. It rather supposes an antecedent injury received, and satisfaction demanded, and refused. Whether well founded or not, it assumes the character of frankness and magnanimity, by announcing the hostility it intends, and putting the enemy on his defence. If our ground was good, if the war on our side was just at any time, it was so before February 1793, and our declaration should have preceded theirs. In the conduct of great affairs, the advantages of cunning are very inconsiderable. By provoking a challenge, or driving your opponent to break the peace, you may possibly have the law on your side in a private quarrel. Between nations this is not policy, but deceit : and a poor deceit too, that deceives nobody.

The real man who refuses satisfaction, and forces his will upon the world.

On these points the King's Ministers affirmed, and continue to affirm, that the war was just and necessary. They do not contend that the character of the French Government is improved, or that the war was less just and necessary in 1796 or 1797, than it was originally. Nevertheless they have offered to negotiate, and, as they say, with a sincere intention to make peace. We are then to consider what measures they took to insure success to the negotiation, and for what ostensible reasons they broke it off. The validity of the second will throw a light on the sincerity of the first. The proposition to be believed is, that the object, which they had most at heart in 1796 and 1797, was to establish *a sincere and constant friendship and a reciprocal intercourse* (in the terms of Lord Grenville's project) with an abandoned crew, with *the same individual junto of assassins**, who were and are incapable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity with any body. It would be useless now to look back to the particulars of Lord Malmesbury's first embassy, except to observe that, by yielding Belgium, of which the French were in possession, and which it was impossible for us to wrest out of their hands, we might have had a tolerable peace in December 1796, and saved the superfluous expence and distress of two campaigns at least, with all their possible consequences. The language of our Government, on that subject, is never to be forgotten. On the 17th of December 1796, Lord Malmesbury says to Monsieur de la Croix, "I should not deal fairly with you if I hesitated to declare, in the *ouset* of our negotiation, that, on *this* point, you must entertain no expectation that his Ma-

Mr. Burke's Third Letter.

" jesty

“ jesty will relax, or ever *relax* the Nether-
 “ lands remain a part of France. The Minister’s
 disposition to peace had been such, he would not
 have made Belgium an insurmountable objection to
 it. He knew the resolution of the French by their
 positive answer to Mr. Wickham some months be-
 fore. He knew that, without giving up Flanders,
 it was in vain to negotiate, and that peace was not
 to be had. He knew also, or he ought to have known,
 that Austria would not support him in his pretension
 to carry this point. In December 1796, Lord Malmes-
 bury was instructed to make the cession of Belgium
 an indispensable condition of any treaty with France.
 In April the preliminaries were signed at Leoben, and
 Belgium relinquished by the Emperor. For this pre-
 tended object, however, Mr. Pitt continues the war,
 and then *he* also gives it up with all possible indif-
 ference. How is any principle or profession of Go-
 vernment to be depended on, when, after so solemn
 a declaration in the King’s name, we see another ne-
 gotiation solicited in less than six months, and not a
 word said of this famous *sine quâ non*, from which his
 Majesty would *never* relax? The intervening paci-
 fication, between France and the Emperor, will not
 account for so rapid a change in the fundamental sys-
 tem professed by our Cabinet. The question was,
 whether Belgium should remain a part of France, not
 whether it should be restored to the Emperor. By
 their peace with him the French acquired a great ac-
 cession of strength, as well as liberty of action; and
 the political objection, on our side, to leaving Belgium
 in their hands, was infinitely stronger, after that peace
 than before it. Necessity may be pleaded to justify
 any thing; but where was the wisdom or necessity of
 committing his Majesty’s honour by such a peremp-
 tory declaration? A wise Minister takes his ground
 deliberately, and then he maintains it firmly.

On the 30th of December 1796, Mr. Pitt in-

formed the House of Commons that the King's Ambassador had been dismissed *with every mark of ignominy and insult*; that a *studied insult*, refined and matured by the French Directory, had been offered to his Britannic Majesty; and then he asked whether, "after the King's Minister had been ordered, in the most insulting manner, to leave the territories of France, after our propositions had been slighted, and our Ambassador insulted, were we, by sending couriers to Paris, to prostrate ourselves at the feet of a stubborn and supercilious Government, to do what they require, and to submit to whatever they may impose? I hope there is not a hand in his Majesty's councils which would sign the proposal; that there is not a heart in this House, who would sanction the measure; and that there is not an individual in the British dominions, who would act as the courier." Such language, whether true or not, may serve to inflame a popular assembly, but is not prudent or justifiable in a Minister of State. How can he adhere to it without perpetual war? How can he retract it without everlasting infamy? The French made no apology. They offered no reparation. Yet, in less than six months, when the Minister himself had so degraded the office that no gentleman ought to have accepted it, the same hand was found to sign, the same heart to sanction, and the same courier to carry the message, exactly to the same parties. Whether this miserable step indicated any thing but a sudden panic, must be determined by the circumstances that preceded, and the conduct that followed it. The hearts of men are not so easily changed. The French peace with the Emperor, the insolvency of the Bank, and the mutinies in the Fleet, were enough to frighten Ministers, as they did the nation. But fear is not the parent of honour and sincerity. Without opening the

the negotiation again, Mr. Pitt must have kept his place. Now a mere offer of peace, and to hostilities, while all the causes and the effects of a rooted hatred remain, can impose on no man. There must be a real disposition to peace, and this must be manifested by a temperate, if not amicable language, and by all the acts of kindness and conciliation, which a state of war will admit of; otherwise the forms of a negotiation avail nothing. Prudent and temperate proceedings, not hasty submissions, prepare the way and dispose the minds of hostile powers to treat with moderation and good faith. On any other footing, a mere pacification, if it could be obtained, would be nothing but a malignant truce, in which the hostile mind would remain, and the preparation for hostility continue. If, while you offer peace in terms, your actions and discourses indicate nothing but suspicion, hatred, and revenge, you may possibly purchase a cessation of arms by concessions and sacrifices; but you leave the enmity entire, and strengthen it against you by the price you pay for a temporary suspension of its effects. To make peace without friendship, unless you could dictate the terms instead of receiving them, is not merely useless, but extremely dangerous; especially with an enemy, who owe you nothing but hatred, who know that you aim at their utter destruction, and who never can believe that the present Ministry can be in earnest in their pacific professions, unless they are the falsest and vilest of mankind, or unless they are reduced to the last extremity. While the negotiation lasted, invectives and abuse against the French Directory went on as usual, or with very little interruption, in the newspapers paid and instructed by our Government. Every man in London knows that these papers speak the language of Ministers, and that they are kept in constant pay, on purpose to prepare the public to adopt the sentiments and views

views of the French. The French know it as well as we, and their knowledge governs their opinion of us. It is much more than the formal declarations and diplomatic phrases in use among Ministers.

The second appointment of Lord Malmesbury, in himself unexceptionable, was not calculated to inspire the French with confidence, or to conciliate their good will. With or without a reason, they suspected and distrusted him. The Directory said, that "another choice would have augured more favourably for the speedy conclusion of a peace." Lord Grenville said, "that this remark of the Directory was certainly not of a nature to require any answer." The strict right of our Government to choose their Ambassador is not denied, nor was it disputed by the French. But, in human dealing, strict right is very often more offensive than injury, because it furnishes no regular cause of complaint, especially if it be of no real or important use to the party that asserts it; and still more, if it be harshly or superciliously maintained.

To justify the Minister in breaking off the negotiation, he is bound to prove, not only that the demands of the French were unjust and unreasonable, for such they might be in articles of no consequence, but that they could not be granted without such danger, as exceeded the risk, and outweighed the consequences of continuing the war.

1. The French Plenipotentiaries objected to the title of *King of France* assumed by His Majesty. They said it was essential to the full acknowledgement of their *Republic*, that this regal title should not exist any where. Lord Malmesbury endeavoured to make them feel, but without success, that it was cavilling for a mere word!

2. Their second demand was for a restitution of the ships taken and destroyed at Toulon, or an equivalent

valent for them. No subject was named of in England, or more likely to be named, not insisted on by the French. . . . Malmesbury said *it came upon him unexpectedly*. . . . The argument of the French stands thus : “ Lord ~~Malme~~ was admitted into Toulon, and took possession of the ships, &c. on the following condition, viz. that, when peace shall be re-established in France, the ships and forts, which shall have been put into the hands of the English, shall be restored to the *French nation*, in the same state they were in, when the inventory was delivered. By treating with the Republic, you acknowledge the existence of a competent government, to which every restitution, due to the French nation, ought to be made. You cannot pretend that you hold the ships taken at Toulon as a deposit in trust for Louis XVIII. when, by making a perpetual peace with the Republic, you are yourselves parties to an act which annihilates the pretensions of that person. Neither could even *he* have any claim to the restitution, unless he were in possession of the Throne. Ships of war, magazines, &c. are national property, not within the personal ownership of princes, much less removable with their persons. They are the fixtures of the State, which even the Sovereign in possession cannot alienate from the defence or service of the country. We demand the restitution as representatives of the French nation, which you acknowledge us to be, and precisely in the terms of your own engagement.” Lord Malmesbury, without attempting to answer the argument, rejects the claim. He says “ it was *so perfectly unlooked for*, that it was *impossible* for him to be provided for it in his instructions, and that they could not have devised a step more likely to defeat the great end of his mission.” Lord Grenville says, that these demands were received here
with

with great surprise. Now does any man believe that they were so entirely unexpected, or is it any answer to an objection to say, that you are extremely surprised at His Majesty's declaration of the 25th of October, these demands are called *frivolous and offensive, without any solid advantages to France.* It is not quite clear that the objection to His Majesty's retaining the title of King of their country, is on *their* part, a mere cavil about a word, whatever it may be on ours. But that the recovery of their ships should not be a solid advantage to them is, to say the least of it, an extravagant proposition.

These, however, were not the difficulties that put an end to the negotiation; it was not quite desperate until the French Plenipotentiaries called on Lord Malmesbury to declare, "whether he had or had not sufficient powers to treat on the principle of a general restitution of every possession belonging to them and their allies, which remained in His Majesty's hands." This demand was accompanied with a specific explanation, which cannot fairly be separated from it, viz. "That an inquiry into the nature of the discretionary authority confided in a Minister by no means implied an intention of requiring him to act up to it, to its utmost limits." The demand and the explanation must be taken together, and considered as one proposition. To any other Ambassador, the French probably would not have thought it necessary to put such a question. They had not forgotten that, in his former embassy, *at every communication, he was in want of the advice of his Court* *. Whether this was their motive or not, it is evident that, if they had meant by this step to put an end to the negotiation, they would have insisted on the question simply, without the explanation. Lord Malmesbury

* Delacroix, December 19, 1796.

says,

says, that "their question was not the extent of
 " *his full powers*, but to require him to declare
 " the nature of his instructions. In the first
 place, he answers their question, that it is materi-
 ally different from that which they attached to it;
 he then affirms, that the extent of his powers, and
 the nature of his instructions, are one and the same
 thing. But for this he assigns no reason; nor does
 he at all specify or intimate what the inconvenience
 or disadvantage would have been, if he had given
 them a direct answer in the affirmative, which he
 might have done in the terms of Lord Grenville's
 official note of the 17th of June, viz. "That his full
 " powers included *every case*, and gave him the *most*
 " *unlimited authority* to conclude *any* articles, trea-
 " ties," &c., or in the very terms of their own de-
 mand, understood according to the explanation with
 which it was accompanied. They knew as well as
 he, that, in the exercise and application of his
 powers, he must be governed by his instructions,
 and that he might be as effectually restrained, by his
 instructions, from making particular restitutions, as
 he could be by any limitation in his powers. If he
 had said *Yes*, the negotiation must have proceeded,
 and possibly might have ended with success. What
 were the avowed objects that stood in the way of it?
 The Cape and Ceylon. In our declaration of the
 25th of October 1797, it is asserted, "that France
 " has insisted that His Majesty should give up,
 " without compensation, and into the hands of his
 " *enemies*, the necessary defences of his possessions,
 " and the future safeguards of his empire." Now
 of this Declaration the two first articles are palpably
 untrue. The question was, not whether Lord
 Malmesbury should actually consent to the restitution
 of all our conquests, but whether he had powers to
 treat to that extent. Such restitution is never made
 D until

until peace is concluded; of course it cannot be made in the present state of the war. These places, viz. the Cape and Ceylon, are the necessary defences of His Majesty's possessions, and the future safeguards of his empire. Does the Minister mean to affirm, in the plain and direct sense of the Declaration, that our possessions in India could not be defended, that our Indian empire was not safe, without the Cape and the Dutch settlements in Ceylon? The fact is, that while France and Holland had a marine sufficient to cope with us in the Indian seas, and while the French held a powerful establishment in the Carnatic, the British empire was not only defensible and safe, but grew and increased beyond the limits of true policy and prudence, and that its danger, if any, arose from its unbounded frontier and unmanageable extent. How the acquisition of the Cape and Ceylon could be a security against that sort of danger, or why our other possessions should be defenceless without them at any time, and particularly *now*, when the power of France and Holland is annihilated in India, are questions, which the writer of the Declaration has not thought fit to meddle with. Nor is it possible to conceive a rational argument, by which the affirmative on either of them can be made out. But, if the assertion were in any degree true, and if these acquisitions were ever so valuable, still you must consider the price you are to pay for them. Are they worth the cost and charge of a single campaign? Do they pay the expence of their establishments, or any part of it? Do we really want these places for defence and security? Are we never to make peace without them? Or is it only a pretence set up for the real purpose of continuing the war? The Minister is bound to state his reasons for affirming, that the Cape and Ceylon are the necessary defences of his Majesty's possessions, and the safeguard

guard of his empire ; or to tell us what he means by that declaration. A question is sufficiently answered by a contradiction.

If this state of the facts be true, and if these considerations are valid, the conclusion from them may be quashed by power, or denied by prejudice, but cannot be resisted in argument ;—that the Minister has voluntarily plunged the nation into this disastrous war, not only without justice or necessity, but without a provocation, and in the face of submissions little short of supplication ; that, in offering to treat with impious regicides, robbers, and assassins, he has abandoned what he called the moral principle of the war ; that, in offering to renew the intercourse between England and France, considering how France is constituted, he has abandoned what he called the fundamental policy of the war ; that these steps were taken not seriously for their pretended object, but to answer other purposes ; that, if he had been sincere in desiring it, he might have had peace long ago on tolerable terms ; that the Directory now will never make peace with him, because they cannot trust him ; and that, as long as the war is continued, they will rise in their demands. The Minister will say that he is proud of their enmity, and that the distrust of such a foe gives him an additional claim to the confidence of his country. The French object to him not because he is hostile to them, but because they think his conduct has been treacherous. *Durante bello*, he ought to be their enemy ; but he ought not to offer peace with one hand, while, with the other, he fomented plots and conspiracies to overturn their government. Admitting however the merit of this hostile character, and forgetting that, as long as it prevails on his own principles, there can be no peace with France or settlement of Ireland, has he, after all, a real claim to it ? At first he denounces immortal hatred to the French,

to their government, to their existence,

Littora altioribus contraria, fluctibus, undas.

He then makes them a cordial offer of perpetual peace, sincere friendship, and mutual intercourse. When that fails, he goes back to his enmity. He then makes them a second tender of his most sincere amity; and now he reverts to his enmity again. *Bellum, pax rursus.* He reviles and courts the same parties alternately, and Parliament vibrates with him.

In what condition this just and necessary war, if ever it can be ended, will leave us at last, may appear doubtful to those, who are not struck with the actual result of it. They, who thrive by the present distress, are not likely to be alarmed by future dangers. The vermin feed, and the animal dies. In the last five years, the Minister has wasted above two hundred millions of money borrowed, besides all the growing income of the country, and an immense arrear of debt unaccounted and unprovided for. He set out with an association of the principal powers of Europe, whom he paid, and of the inferior states, whom he forced to join in the confederacy; and now we have but one friend left, who, *if not actually negotiating with France*, makes no contribution to the war, and must sink, if she is not supported by the protection of Great Britain. Is there another power in Europe, that would not gladly promote the downfall of England? They see us stand aloof, commanding the sea, and apparently in safety, encouraging, bribing, or bullying other nations to persecute and destroy one another. On the Continent, the English Government, and not the French, with all their enormities, are considered as the original incendiaries and common enemy of mankind. The French, they

they say, plunder the house, and then set it on fire.

The kingdom of Ireland, which was a third of the empire, instead of contributing to the common cause, is proclaimed to be in a state of open rebellion, and with difficulty kept down by a great army, paid by England, which ought to have been employed against France, but which is now in such a state, as to be formidable to every one, but the enemy. Specific evidence is unnecessary. The condition of the army is sufficient to prove what the condition of the country must be, where soldiers range at large, not only without civil authority, but without discipline. But the groans of Ireland are too distant to be heard. Her sorrows are not seen. The dresses of the opéra are corrected, and all the duties of Christianity are performed.

In England and Scotland the general disposition of the people may be fairly judged of by the means, which are said to be necessary to counteract it; an immense standing army, barracks in every part of the country, the Bill of Rights suspended, and in effect a military government.

Since the year 1793, the property of the public creditor has lost about half its marketable value, which the enormous increase of the mass makes it impossible it should ever recover. The whole effect of a sinking fund of four millions, augmented by the fall of public credit, and acting on a capital so depreciated, is to keep the 3 per cents. at a fluctuating price between 48 and 50. With that prodigious engine of financial power in his hands, the Minister has been fearful of encountering another loan; and now he confesses, that, under the measures of his administration, public credit has been so much impaired, that it has become absolutely necessary to give additional support and security to the national funds, by making the

the land, and putting it up to auction in Change.

A few months ago, when payment was stopped at the Bank, any man, who had predicted that event, would have been pitied as a madman, or proscribed as a traitor. The Bank is identified with Government, and, with their connivance, may issue its paper to any unknown amount. An act of Parliament is always ready to shelter them from the demands of their lawful creditors. The only effectual security to the public, against an exorbitant emission of Bank paper, is to be obliged to pay in specie on demand. Take away that restraint, and then what is the Bank, or what may it be, but an instrument of enormous power and fraud in the hands of the Minister?

The final fate of the Funds is involved not only in the instant exigencies of the war, but in the necessities which the war will entail on the peace. To provide for the establishments, and to pay the interest of the debt, out of any fund, that does not invade the sources of production, is palpably impossible. But a nation, that supplies its income out of its capital, lives on the feed, and then the question is, not whether a great emergency may not demand and justify a great exertion, but how long the ordinary strength can support the extraordinary effort. The demand, that exceeds the ability, is sure to lessen it; that is, the inability increases with the demand.

Against an invasion, all hearts and hands must be united; but why should the French run the risque of an attempt so desperate, if not impracticable, when it is plain that they can effectually ruin us without it? *Their* purpose is sufficiently answered by the menace; while, on this side, the alarm is encouraged as a spur to contribution.

The superior skill and courage of our officers and seamen have been attended, as I trust they ever will be, with successes that illustrate and adorn the naval character

character of the nation. But the lustre of these great events are by no means permanent. Unless they are wisely applied to the service of peace, they may dazzle and mislead. We must be the respective condition of France and England, taken together, and comprehending all circumstances, when such victories make no impression on the courage and determination, nor even on the prudence of the enemy, and when even the English are not elated by them? We are masters of the ocean, while almost all the ports of Europe, from the Texel to Venice, are shut against us. Our fleets may keep the sea until the ships are worn out, while the French predominate on shore, and may, if they will, engross the trade of the Continent.

This country is now at the utmost strain of all its remaining resources, not for the purpose of attempting any vigorous operation against a vulnerable enemy, which, if it succeeded, might reduce them to reasonable terms, but, if possible, to defend the two islands against an invasion, which the enemy may continue to hold over us, with very little effort on their part, or much inconvenience to their affairs, until the nerves and sinews of England are broken by exertions, unavailing while they last for any purpose of attack, and impossible to be continued. With all the means of success, and weapons of victory in his hands, Mr. Pitt has made the French Republic what it is. We have it from an authority, which some men should respect, that while *the armies and navies of England have been given him without restriction, and its treasures poured out at his feet, his unprosperous prudence has produced all the effects of the blindest temerity, and finally left this country nothing, but her own naked force, to oppose the imminent danger of falling under the dominion of France* *.

* Mr. Burke's Third Letter, p. 19, 26, and 164.

The British nation, by an enemy, is shaken and walled by its numerous efforts to crush a distracted, suffering nation, while France, in the midst of horrible convulsions, extends her basis, and lifts her head above the world. Yet the same councils are continued, and the same courses are pursued. Expectation is maintained against experience, and confidence nourished by disappointment.



FINIS.